DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 456 426 CS 014 479

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TITLE Analysis of the Success for All and School Development Programs and Their Effects on Reading Comprehension.
PUB DATE 2001-10-00
NOTE 37p.; Master of Arts Thesis, Kean University. Appendices contain copyrighted material and are not available through ERIC.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Grade 4; *Instructional Effectiveness; Intermediate Grades; *Reading Achievement; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Research
IDENTIFIERS Comer School Development Program; *Success for All Program

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine whether the Success for All whole school reform model or Comer School Development Program had a significant effect on fourth graders' reading comprehension. Twelve students in experimental group A were homogeneously grouped to be taught using the Success for All whole school reform model. Twelve students in experimental group B were heterogeneously grouped and participated under the Comer whole school reform model. The study took place over a period of 10 weeks in an urban New Jersey school district. The California Achievement Test 5 (CAT5) was used as a pre- and post-test instrument to measure achievement in reading comprehension. Findings suggested that both models seemed to have a positive effect on reading comprehension; however neither program produced a statistically significant difference over the other. (Contains 43 references and 2 tables of data. Appendixes contain permission letter, and the Reading Comprehension component of the CAT5 standardized test used in the study.) (Author/RS)

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ED 456 426

Analysis of the Success for All and School Development Programs and Their Effects on Reading Comprehension

By
Pamela A. Clarke

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

Kean University
October 2001

Received
10/4/01

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine whether the Success for All whole school reform model or Comer School Development Program had a significant effect on fourth graders' reading comprehension. Twelve students in experimental group A were homogeneously grouped to be taught using the Success for All whole school reform model. Twelve students in experimental group B were heterogeneously grouped and participated under the Comer whole school reform model. The study took place over a period of ten weeks in an urban Abbott district. The California Achievement Test 5 was used as a pre and post test instrument to measure achievement in reading comprehension. Findings suggested that both models seemed to have a positive effect on reading comprehension; however neither program produced a statistically significant difference over the other.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my most sincere gratitude and appreciation to my family, especially my sisters Margaret and Marta, and my sons, Stephen and Clinton for supporting me. I would like to thank Reverend William Lee of Fountain Baptist Church, Mrs. Whitlock, Deborah Brown, and my father for the words of encouragement, love, and confidence.

I would like to give heartfelt thanks to Dr. Richard Walter, Dr. Joan Kastner, and especially Dr. Albert Mazurkiewicz for their guidance and expertise.

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One of our nation's most pressing social problems is the prevalence of early school failure, especially in urban public schools. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the average reading proficiency score for 9 year-old students in disadvantaged, urban areas lagged far behind other groups (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

In some cities, large percentages of first graders become official failures when they are not promoted to the second grade (Gottfredson and Gottfredson , 1990). Early educational failure is a strong predictor of later educational failure, drop out, and other problem behavior (Gottfredson , 1987; Gottfredson, Fink, and Graham,1994).

American schools with high concentrations of minority students, especially poor ones, perform particularly badly and so are disproportionately responsible for lowering the averages used in international comparisons. They are also the schools to which most employers refer when they lament the many job applicants whose literacy, math, and computer skills make it difficult to employ, or train them (Holzer, 1996). Employers also complain about applicants' soft job skills, such as coming to work regularly and on time, showing enthusiasm for the job, and interacting with coworkers and clients in mutually pleasant ways (Moss and Tilly,1996). It is these claims which charge American schools with not meeting the goal of turning out productive citizens to competently join today's workforce and society at-large.

For over 25 years New Jersey's urban districts have been plagued with low achievement scores, as a result a reform initiative was begun. The state Supreme Court has ordered the state to spend more on urban schools. In May of 1997, the court ordered Trenton to send $246 million to 28 districts that were struggling. In addition to the

money, the court ordered the state to find a way to effectively educate urban children. Thus, whole school reform was begun. Schools in struggling urban districts must choose a reform program that has been proven to work. Success For All was the answer for the former Whitman administration. Schools are allowed to choose other reform programs, such as Comer's School Development Program, but , they have to justify why they are not using Success For All. Both Success For All and the School Development Program have been researched and their methods proven to be effective.

The Success For All program has a reading curriculum designed to prevent school failure. In kindergarten and first grade, students participate in storytelling and retelling (StaR; Karweit,1988). After the teacher has read the story students must act out or retell the story. In the second half of kindergarten, students start beginning reading. Research indicates that story reading improves vocabulary (Burroughs, 1972; Chomsky, 1972) and understanding of print conventions and function (Baghban, 1984; Clay,1979 ; Smith, 1978).. In first through third grades a form of cooperative integrated reading and composition (CIRC; Stevens et al., 1987) is used. Children must read books at home, then share the reading through presentation, dramatization, or other forms. In grades 1 to 3 an informal reading placement assessment is administered initially to homogeneously group students according to ability level. Students are assessed every 8 weeks. Students who are doing either extremely well or having great difficulty may be reassigned to a different reading group at that time.

The reading tutor is one of the most important components of the program. The tutor works one-on-one with first grade students who are not doing well. Tutors teach the same material that is being taught by the classroom teacher, but, in a way that may be more

appropriate for the child being tutored. It is policy for first graders to receive priority for tutors. The policy is based on the idea that reading difficulties should be remedied as soon as possible.

To get parents involved, there is a family support component. The purpose is to make parents feel comfortable with school, as well as to provide specific services to families who may be in need. Depending on the funding available, family support is made up of the staff already present or social workers and other staff.

The Success for All composite program is based on the following plausible expectations: Increased time in instruction in reading, instruction at the appropriate level, incentives for learning, and individual tutoring linked to classroom instruction that supplements (rather than replaces) that instruction, will improve the acquisition of learning skills (Madden and Slavin, 1987). By third grade, all children should be reading on grade level. This is the Success for All plan to prevent school failure.

As a prelude to enhancing academics, the School Development Program first seeks to improve the interpersonal and social climate of a school (Comer, 1980). This change is expected to yield improvement in the psychosocial climate as well as the academics of the students. The principal theory of this program is that each school should determine its own social and academic goals. The structures and processes needed to establish, monitor, and modify the program, however, are specific.

There are three main structures which adhere to specific processes ,they are:

*The School Planning and Management Team

*The Social Support Team

*The Parent Team

The premier structure is the School Planning and Management Team. This team is comprised of school administrators, teachers, other staff, parents, and sometimes students. The primary purpose of the School Planning and Management Team is to govern. This team develops a school improvement plan, seeks support from everyone in the school community, monitors progress of the plan's goals, and suggests modifications as the need arises.

The Social Support Team consists of school professionals concerned with students' psychological and social welfare. Included here would be counselors, social workers, nurses, special education teachers, and psychologists. This team gives aid and services to students with special needs and acts to prevent problems by sharing with parents and staff what is known about child development. The Social Support Team also disseminates information on how racial and social factors of local relevance influences a child's development.

The Parent Team is the third program structure. The goal of this team is to assemble parents to support the school by assisting with governance. Parents volunteer in fund raising, going on trips, monitoring hallways, and assisting in classrooms. Sometimes this team helps adults with parenting skills. The hope is that this team invokes the close community bonds that prevailed when teachers lived in the same community they taught in.

All three program structures are meaningless unless they operate according to process principals that Comer trusts will eventually become wide spread within the school, not just restricted to the teams. This is accomplished by adhering to the process principles which are:

*adults in the building should cooperate with each other, putting students' needs above their own

*the school should operate with a problem-solving orientation to foster improved team work (rather than faultfinding)

*decisions should be reached by consensus rather than voting to promote empathy and listening and avoid the polarization of winning and losing created by voting

When all program structures and principles are operating, the result should be a more humane and effective school (Cook et al., 1999).

HYPOTHESIS

To add to the body of Whole School Reform research, this study was established to Analyze the effectiveness of the Succes , for All program on reading comprehension among fourth grade students as opposed to the methods of instruction used in another whole school reform program, the School Development Program. For the purpose of this study it was hypothesized that the Success for All program would more greatly enhance reading comprehension.

PROCEDURE

The population selected for this study was one homogeneously grouped fourth grade class and one heterogeneously grouped fourth grade class. Both groups are comprised of minority studeats from the same urban, Abbott district in Essex County, New Jersey. Prior to this study the twelve homogeneously grouped students were grouped by ability level according to their score on a pre-assessment placement test given by the school. The twelve heterogeneously grouped students had no specific criteria for placement. The groups are considered average ability groups by their site administrators. The homogeneous and heterogeneous groups will hereafter be referred to as Group A and Group B, respectively.

For this study, both groups were pre-tested for comprehension using the California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition Level 13, Form A. The students in Group A were organized in cooperative groups. They were given daily reading instruction using the Success for All Reading Wings component. The reading teacher began each daily lesson by reading to students for 20 minutes, engaging them in discussion of the reading, reviewing vocabulary for approximately five minutes, giving direct instruction for 45 minutes, giving a selected student two minutes to edit a sentence on the board, and finally allowing 15 minutes of sustained silent reading at the end of most lessons. There weretimes when students engaged in partner reading, silent reading, and writing about the story.

The students in Group B followed the general five-day plan of the reading series which includes flexible grouping options of what to teach and how to teach it. Day One focuses on building story background and vocabulary. On Day Two and Day Three the literature is read. Days Four and Five are skills days. The lessons are about forty-five minutes long and regularly include spelling, grammar, and the writing process. Each group used the Macmillan Spotlight on Literacy series.

At the conclusion of a ten- week period, students were given the California Achievement Test, Fifth Edition Level 13, Form A again. Mean raw scores for both groups, in the area of comprehension, were collected for pre and post -test measures. The t-test was used to determine the significance of the difference between the means for Group A and Group B with respect to comprehension.

RESULTS

The mean, standard deviation, and t-test result for pre and post-test comprehension scores are shown in Table I and Table II.

Comparisons between pre-test results on the comprehension test are indicated in Table I .

Means, Standard Deviations, and t of the Samples' Pre-Experiment Scores

TABLE I

Sample	M	SD	t
Group A	**2.62**	**0.73**	**.05**
Group B	**2.60**	**0.73**	

NS = Not Significant

The students in Group A, using the Success for All program, achieved a mean of 2.62 compared to the students in Group B, using the general five-day plan under the Comer School Development Program, who achieved a mean of 2.60. This indicates a .02 difference, in favor of Group A; however, this mean difference along with the t difference of .05 shows that this difference in comprehension pre-test achievement was not significant.

Comparisons between post-test results on comprehension are indicated in Table II.

Means, Standard Deviations, and t of the Samples' Post Experiment Scores

TABLE II

Sample	M	SD	t
Group A	3.18	1.03	.60
Group B	3.85	3.70	

NS= Not Significant

Experimental Group A achieved a mean of 3.18 compared to a mean of 3.85 for experimental Group B. A difference of .67 between the means is indicated, in favor of Group B, however, the t of .60 indicates that this difference was not significant. These results indicate positive gains in reading comprehension for both groups, however, neither group achieved a significant improvement over the other.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The hypothesis of this study, that the Success for All program would more greatly enhance reading comprehension was not supported. Neither the Success for All program or the Comer School Development Program produced a statistically significant difference over the other. The results of the study, however, indicate that although the Success for All program did not have a significantly greater effect on achievement, than the Comer program, it did seem to positively impact student behaviors and attitudes toward reading.

There are several factors in addition to direct instruction which may have positively influenced the students' achievement in reading. Some of these factors include (a) partner reading, (b) story discussion, and (c) self-selection of books.

During the course of the study, the teacher observed student behaviors that would have appeared to have positively influenced students' reading achievement. There seemed to be an increase in motivation and interest when students were allowed to select or bring in their own books to read during the sustained silent reading time. The teacher noted that often these same books were used for Book Club, a periodic time when students gave individual presentations of a book they read. The students also seemed to enjoy partner reading. The teacher observed students using strategies modeled by the teacher for partner reading. For example, students attempted to help each other oftentimes to sound out words, figure out meanings, and understand print using informal discussion and page illustrations. This parallels research done by Hatt (1993) whose findings showed that in a shared reading encounter the reading time was not restricted to sounding out words, but, included more meaningful talk about parts of a story, illustrations, and personal background knowledge. There are other educational benefits of "quiet talk" according to Hong (1981). He concluded that "quiet talk" can be helpful in gaining a sense of what the story is about, exchanging personal reactions and feelings about what is being read, and using decoding skills to figure out words in the text.

When the students were allowed to read their self-selected books during sustained silent reading, a time for practice and reinforcement of skills was provided in a context of meaningful reading. This may not occur as easily or as frequently within a heterogeneous class. Koshinen and Blum (1986) found this time to be particularly important for low

achieving readers who seldom receive enough time to read or practice skills in traditional programs of instruction. The observer in this study noted that the children made more attempts to apply decoding strategies while engaging in independent quiet reading. They attempted to sound out words more and tried to make sense of what they were reading with less dependence on the teacher. The students seemed to greatly enjoy being able to select their own books to read. The motivation to read seemed to increase.
Leonhart(1998) supports the benefits of this type of program and found that being given the chance to engage in periods of free choice reading can benefit all types of readers. Poor readers can enjoy the chance to read materials that interests them. Average readers begin to see reading as a fun experience rather than a chore. Advanced readers begin to read highly challenging books and engage in more critical thinking activities. Exposure to the concept of partner reading, story discussion, and self-selection of books may have positively influenced the reading experience of students in Group A.

In the post-test, Group B performed slightly better. While there are more similarities than differences between the two groups, several factors may have contributed to Group B's slight gain. First of all, the classroom teacher used the more flexible five-day plan. In keeping with the Comer idea of modifying goals, the five-day plan offered flexibility. It also included segments geared toward teaching spelling and some phonics, but what may have had the most impact was the strong parental involvement. Parental involvement has been shown to play a part in fostering children's cognitive growth and academic success. Parental involvement had been defined as "any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child's development or direct parent participation with a child's school in the interest of the child (Reynolds,1992). The Commission on Reading

found that parents, not the schools, laid the foundation for a child's learning to read. Research says that when parents are a part of their child's education, the student is more likely to stay in school and is likely to achieve (Anderson, 2000).

While Table II shows a minor difference of .67 in the means, over a longer period of time there may indeed have been a significant difference with Group B achieving at a greater rate over Group A. These findings have significant implications for additional studies. More research is needed to analyze the effects of the Success for All program and the Comer School Development program on reading comprehension.

RELATED RESEARCH

The research gathered on direct instruction implies that it is an effective strategy for teaching reading to students with less than adequate reading skills. The major characteristics of direct instruction identified by Graves, Juel, and Graves (1998) are objectives projected into experiences, formal scheduling with definite time allocations, specific skills activities and objective evaluation (King,1978). Direct instruction is defined as "active teaching" (Good,1979). He perceives it as an instructional program where a teacher identifies and specifies learning outcomes, uses on-going diagnosis to assess pupils' progress, and makes frequent, clear presentations that illustrate and set purposes for doing assigned tasks.

The importance of direct instruction and structure and their effects on student success was the focus of research conducted by Medley (1977). His extensive review identified some important features of direct instruction. One of the notable findings dealt with the effect of teachers' questioning on pupils' level of achievement. It was found that competent teachers of low socioeconomic students preferred using fact-oriented questions. Questions were low in complexity and were geared toward encouraging students to respond. Feedback that addressed the students' response was given, usually in an attempt to aid the student in giving the correct answer. Rewarding the question or asking an easier question seemed to maximize the chances for student success. A pattern of teaching practices were determined to influence successful learning (McDonald,1976). Practices that encouraged and sustained interaction were most effective. A difference in instructional practices in terms of pupils' grade level is noted by Brophy (1979) in his review of instructional research. In the early grades, teachers elicited responses and gave

feedback to each child in small-group settings. In intermediate and upper grades the groups were larger, there was discussion on higher cognitive levels, less teacher direction, increased pace throughout content, and more student freedom associated with effective instruction.

There are two possible reasons why direct instruction works (Good,1979). First, direct instruction emphasizes the importance of the individual teacher. It may give teachers the motivation to plan their days fully to meet their expectations more successfully. Secondly, direct instruction provides a clear focus on achievement and helps teachers conceptualize and emphasize achievement goals with greater specificity and enthusiasm.

Cooperative learning methods could replace traditional instruction in certain subject areas as research conducted from Johns Hopkins University (Slavin,1987) has shown. One program examined the use of peer teaching to instruct third and fourth graders in reading and writing. The program, Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) included students working in team pairs who participated in predicting and summarizing, oral reading, decoding of vocabulary and writing and processing skills. Findings from eleven experimental and ten control classes indicated positive effects on achievement favoring the experimental group in areas of reading comprehension, language expression, vocabulary, mechanics, and spelling. Classes instructed with CIRC methods showed gains of 30% to 70% of grade equivalents more than control students.

More recently (Dixon-Krauss,1995) conducted a study to examine how peer social interaction as part of reading instruction improved the reading and writing skills of twenty-four first and second graders working in cooperative pairs. The study found that students' word recognition and use of higher level thought processes improved as a

result of partner reading and dialogue in response journals. The attitudes of these readers was assessed before and after treatment and it was found that the children felt more secure about reading aloud and about how their peers viewed their reading performance after treatment.

In an effort to meet the growing needs of educators to vary teaching strategies in classrooms to cover the intellectual ranges from gifted to slow learner, the Peabody Classwide Peer Tutoring program (CWPT) was designed (Fuchs,Mathes, and Simmons, 1997). High and low performing readers are paired to participate in story retelling, paragraph shrinking, and predictions relay. As a result of being involved in the CWPT program, it was found that a variety of learners made gains in reading achievement, including high, average, low, and students with disabilities.

There are a variety of ways that cooperative groups may be formed. Students may group themselves or the teacher may group students. The following list shows some of the most important factors to consider when deciding how to group students (Graves, Juel, & Graves, 1998):

*Your general instructional objectives

*Your specific objectives for individual children

*The material your students will be reading

*Your students' individual strengths

*Students' abilities to work with others in the group

*The number and types of groups you can successfully manage

*The proviso that no student be consistently assigned to the low group

Keeping these factors in mind when grouping may increase the chances for success in cooperative learning activities.

In another study Koskinen and Blum (1986) explored the importance of children engaging in real literature experiences and offered a strategy of paired repeated reading to demonstrate this idea. Same age peers were randomly assigned and meaningfully involved with books socially where they could practice learned skills, develop new ones, and obtain encouragement and feedback from their peers. Koskinen and Blum (1986) concluded that random pairing of reading partners benefited both listener and reader. They also observed gains in oral fluency, word recognition, and comprehension among below average readers who participated in this kind of peer interaction.

During the 1980's the topic of many studies was experimentation with tutoring involving low achievers and the learning disabled. In one such study (Limbrick, McNaughton, and Glynn,1985) researchers looked closely at research which confirmed that a good predictor of pupil achievement is the amount of time they spend actively engaged in reading. Low achieving readers, it was thought, needed a considerable amount of active reading to learn appropriate reading skills. Observations, unfortunately, indicated that these students spent less time engaged in meaningful reading than their peers. Further investigation by Limbrick, et al. (1985) was conducted whereby three ten and eleven year-old underachieving students tutored three underachieving six, seven, and eight year-olds. The pairs participated in the reading of texts where praise and modeling was provided by the tutors. Both tutors and tutees read silently with tutees requesting help from tutors as difficulties presented themselves. As a result of the tutoring, tutees showed gains in reading, reading skills, and comprehension, along with improved

performance on classroom assignments and standardized tests. Academic gains were demonstrated by tutors as well as increased levels in oral reading as a result of their own independent silent reading. The combined process of allocation of extra time spent in active reading and the tutoring was responsible for the positive effect observed in this study. It seemed that the deliberate teaching strategies which were taught to the tutors were an essential component of the success of the program. Dowhower ((1989) reported on yet another technique for improving the reading ability of remedial and developmental readers in the regular classroom. Her report focused on the findings of several recent studies which have concluded that when are engaged in experiences of repeated reading, their comprehension, reading rate, and accuracy increase. Dowhower comments on two types of repeated reading techniques, namely, Unassisted Repeated Reading and Assisted Repeated Reading. In Unassisted Repeated Reading children practice repeated readings of passages or text independently. In Assisted Repeated Reading the child reads along with a live or audio-taped model of a passage. In her report she states that as a result of engaging in either process, slow readers demonstrated increases in reading rate and accuracy on unpracticed passages and made gains in comprehension on practices texts. In a smaller study Dowhower found that after rereading five practice stories at the second grade level, students comprehension increased from 66% to 88% on unpracticed passages. Teachers have integrated this technique into cooperative learning experiences such as the paired repeated reading program created by Koskinen and Blum (1986). Incorporated either way into instructional routines of a classroom, research shows that repeated reading is a beneficial practice that can be used to enhance reading skills of both good and poor readers.

There were studies in the 1980's that rose out of concern for the dissatisfaction of instructional practices provided to students of a wide spectrum of ability and socioeconomic levels. In one report Delquadri, Greenwood, Whorton., Carta, and Hall (1986) provided an overview of research studies conducted to investigate the effects of classwide peer tutoring to help improve the education of disadvantaged, minority, or learning disabled children in regular and special education classrooms. It was discovered, after several research observations, that students were not engaging in an active level of responding during teacher directed instruction which invariably had negative effects on their achievement. Based on the assumption that the opportunity to respond was a critical aspect of student achievement, classwide peer tutoring procedures were implemented to create the active student responding necessary for success in oral reading and writing activities. One study found that active student responding increased from 28% to 78% as a result of classwide peer tutoring in oral reading, comprehension, and workbook activities (Elliot, Hughes, Delquadri, 1984 cited in Delquadri et al .,1986). Greenwood, Carta, and Hall (1986) presented a review which emphasized peer tutoring strategies as effective for changing student behaviors such as appropriate social interaction, compliance, and paying attention. Frequently, teachers employed behavioral management techniques in isolation and did not attend to academic and behavioral demands of the whole class. A strong connection of compliance in the classroom to the academic experiences provided to students has been found by researchers. Thus, organizing peer mediated tutoring experiences in which children are actively engaged in academic behaviors, will decrease the likelihood that they will engage in inappropriate behaviors. This theory is supported by Topping (1989) who commented that the very

cooperative, active, and interactive nature of peer tutoring entices children with behavioral problems to act appropriately and find great satisfaction from acting as the tutor in the paired relationship.

With the end of the 1980's came a broad spectrum of cooperative learning strategies to be applied across various grade levels and subject areas among educators in America. Most teachers since then have implemented cooperative learning strategies as a supplement to their instructional programs across subject areas. Those who maintain conventional programs of instruction are denying their students the benefits to be gained from the use of peer involvement in classroom activities (Slavin, 1987). As the 1980's came to a close a push in new direction could be felt in American education : parental involvement. "Learning to read" is considered by parents, teachers, and the general public to be the most important educational objective for children (Silvern,1985). Without question, parents play a critical role in the literacy development of their children (Rasinski & Fredericks, 1988).Parental involvement has been shown to play a part in fostering children's cognitive growth and academic success. Parental involvement has been defined as "any interaction between a parent and child that may contribute to the child's development or direct parent participation with a child's school in the interest of the child (Reynolds,1992). Studies have shown that parental involvement is necessary from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Parental involvement manifests itself in various ways. Attending open houses, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering for school activities, and being a guest speaker (Akimoff, 1996). Reading to your child, listening to your child read to you, visiting libraries, providing plenty of reading material in the

home, and discussing stories and books with your child are other forms of parental involvement.

Anderson (2000) did a study in 1999 in St. Louis. Included in her sample were 30 second graders in Chapter I remedial reading programs. The study lasted six weeks. They were given reading assistance 45 minutes a day. The purpose of the study was to test whether parental intervention makes a difference in reading achievement. Students were pre-tested in comprehension and vocabulary. The Gates-Mac Ginitie reading test was given the first week to establish a basal score. Parents were also given a letter during the first week requesting their assistance one evening a week for six weeks. A parent questionnaire was then given via telephone to determine parents' and students' attitudes toward reading. In school, students' class work was geared toward comprehension and vocabulary, the areas of concern. While in class students received direct teaching before, during, and after the study. In the remedial class, students were given 15 minutes of phonics and word attack skills, 15 minutes of oral reading with discussion, and 15 minutes of silent reading followed by discussion. Students received consistent praise and rewards of candy and stickers for excellent oral and silent reading.

The weekly results for parental involvement were interesting. For week one, everyone had enthusiasm and good intentions. All of the students read to their parents. Students were excited because the school supplied the books. For week two, parents were to take their children to the library. Five of the 30 students went. Only one sixth of the children received library cards and actually borrowed books. For week three, only one student read a recipe with his parent. In week four, the students were required to read a vocabulary list nightly until they were proficient. No one mastered the list. Since

previous activities were not attempted, no activities were assigned for weeks five and six. The assignment for week five would have been parent and child read a book together. The activity for week six would have been taping the student while he read a book. There seems to be a direct correlation between parent behaviors at home and student reading achievement.

The literacy environment created in the home by parents are believed to play an important role in the development of children's reading and language skills (Evans, Shaw, and Bell,2000). Evidence supporting this belief (Scarborough, Dobrich, and Hager, 1991) found that preschoolers who were read to more and who participated in more solitary book activities at home became better readers by second grade compared to preschoolers with less home literacy experiences.

Over the past century, the role of parental involvement shifted (Zellman and Waterman, 1998). The responsibility of a child's education was relegated to the teacher. In the 1920's, however, parents were encouraged to take on a larger role. They were encouraged to help with homework, attend back-to-school night, join the PTA, come to school-sponsored events, and provide goods for bake sales. According to some, especially Lightfoot (1978) this was seen as a superficial level of interaction. During the 1960's civil rights movement, the role of parental involvement spread to community involvement. Researchers such as Comer conducted studies whose results indicated that parental involvement is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes for students. Among these positive outcomes include fewer behavior problems (Comer,1984), diminished drop out rates (NCES,1992), and increased student achievement

(Muller.1993; Reynolds,1992; D.Stevenson & Baker,1987). These findings have led to the development of more programs which include a parental involvement component.

Stevenson and Baker (1987), did a study and found that parents who are involved in school activities are more likely to have children who are performing well in school. The role of parental involvement is also highly correlated to a teacher's assessment of whether a student is working up to her or his ability. This research further supports the increasing amount of literature regarding the effects of parental involvement on the schooling and socialization of children. It was also found that educated mothers tend to be more active in their child's school activities in addition to maintaining closer contact with the teacher. The results of which appear to be better school performance of children beginning at an earlier age.

In a recent year-long study released by the Educational Research Service (NJEA,2001) several massive trends are sweeping the nation. These trends will have a profound impact on education. Parental involvement will directly or indirectly effect the outcomes of these trends. They include the following:

*Social and intellectual capital will become the primary economic value in society.

*Continuous improvement and collaboration will replace quick fixes and defense of the status quo.

*The millenial generation will insist on solutions to accumulated problems and injustices.

To address these issues New Jersey is advocating the Expanding Scope of Advocacy for Great Public Schools Initiative. This initiative includes a component which is committed to organizing school communities. "These efforts will insure that every child in New Jersey has a chance to attend- and every school employee works in- a great public school." It is recognized in this initiative that teachers and support staff have a responsibility for the students' education, however, parents, family, community residents, school administrators, board members, and the students themselves share in that awesome responsibility. "When families take an interest in their children's education, students make dramatic educational gains." Parents and guardians are their child's first teacher and most important counselor. That is why teachers and school employees seek a partnership with parents and guardians to nurture and develop each child, thus making parental involvement paramount to the success of each child (NJEA,2001).

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APPENDICES

October 2000

Dear Fourth Grade Parent(s):

I am presently studying for an advanced degree in Reading at Kean University. As a requirement, I must conduct a study in Reading Comprehension of fourth grade students. I am seeking your permission to administer the Reading Comprehension component of the CAT5 standardized test. This is a project for my use only.

Thank you for your cooperation. I am looking forward to working with your child.

Yours truly,

Pamela Clarke

Please detach and return

___ I do grant permission

___ I do not grant permission

_____ _____

Parent Signature Date

BEST COPY AVAILABLE